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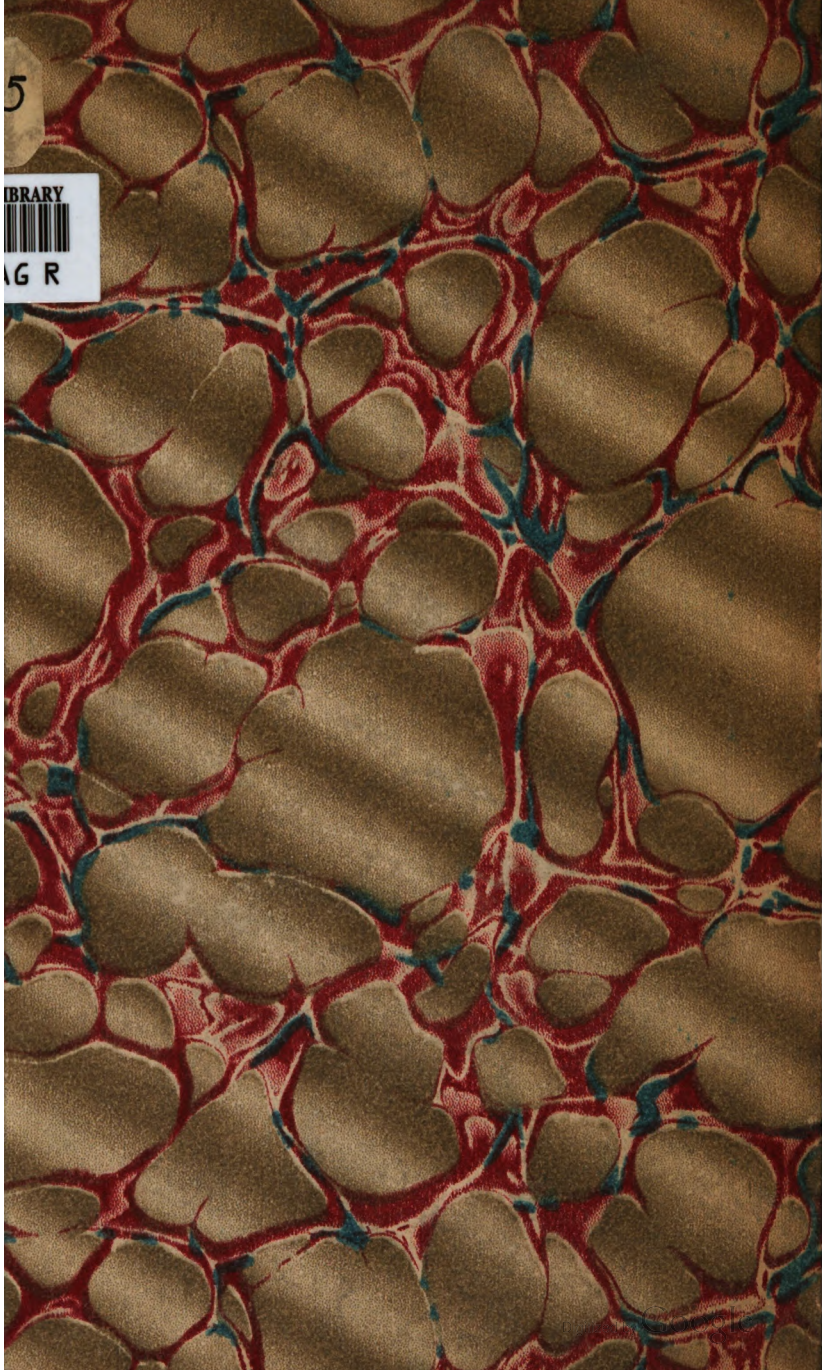
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# THERE AND BACK

OR A LITTLE TRIP  
TO  
HUMORVILLE

BY  
GEORGE  
NIBLO



STREET & SMITH · PUBLISHERS — NEW YORK

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# THERE AND BACK

OR

## A LITTLE TRIP TO HUMORVILLE

By

GEORGE NIBLO

Author of

"What's Your Hurry?" "Step Lively!"  
"B'Gosh!" etc.



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There and Back

## THERE AND BACK.

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**G**RARGEOUS! Don't crowd! Don't crowd! Take it easy and let me tell you one or two little things that are all to the good. Here's a word for the housewife—a good way to skim milk is to let the chalk settle, then drain the water off!

My! This reception tickles me to death. I feel like an Elijah IV. But I'm glad to see you. Hope you've all brought your Bibles and your pocketbooks. They go together, don't they?

There's two things ought to be abolished; the collection plate in church and the waiter's tip in the restaurant.

What's that? A waiter tipped for being obliging? Nonsense. Who ever heard of an obliging waiter?

But stop! I know of one who's not only obliging but absolutely considerate.

Would you believe it, yesterday while I was partaking of my little noonday refreshment I saw this paragon of a waiter hurry to a table next to mine as though summoned with authority.

It was an indignant patron who sat there.

Why his face was as red as a turkey cock, and he held something up on his spoon.



"Look here, waiter, what's this?" he said, indignantly.

"Looks like a shoe lace, sir."

"It is a shoe lace, and it was in my soup."

"Beg pardon, sir, but would you mind lowering your voice? Don't let the gentleman at the corner hear you. He's dined here regular for two years and we've never thrown him in anything extra yet."

Now, that's what I call considerate.

Fancy how hurt that regular customer would have been, had he learned that all the prizes were going to new customers, while his long suffering went for naught.

I had a little experience myself with a chap in the same eating house

He was of Celtic origin and had not left his Irish wit behind him when emigrating to the friendly shores of America.

On this occasion I had decided to treat myself to a favorite dish.

- Ox-tail soup always tickles my palate.

It was a long time showing up.

My companions suggested that they were running the ox to earth, but I scorned such tales.

Seeing my chance I grabbed the waiter as he was whisking past.

"Say, how about that ox-tail soup," I asked anxiously.



"Sure it'll be along, sor, in a half a minute," he made answer.

"Bless your soul how slow you are," I remarked.

"That's the fault of the soup, sor," says he. "Ox-tail is always behind."

This same Hibernian waiter who was so ready with an excuse makes me think of another hailing from the same blessed Green Isle.

In this instance he was the proprietor himself, who was summoned to a certain table where I sat with a frown of displeasure on my face.

"What is it, sor," he asked, "don't the service suit?"

"Suit," I exclaimed. "Look here, I thought you said your eggs were all fresh laid by your own hens? Smell that, and look at it. Why, what should be the white is positively green."



"Sure, it's all right," he said, blithely. "That's the natural color uv it. It's an Oirish hin Oi brought over mysself that lays them wid the green whites; an' she'd lay thim wid green yolks, too, if she could, begorra."

I've got a little Irish blood myself—at least one of my remote ancestors I believe used to pull corks.

But listen :

When I was younger I worked in a cloth factory.

It was the custom in those days to fine an operator for turning out bad work. Those fines made me sick.

One day I brought a piece of cloth to be examined and our lark-eyed manager discovered two little holes about an inch apart. He then showed these to me and demanded a quarter for each hole, that being the fine.

"You say it's a quarter?"



"Yes," said the manager.

"And is it the same for every hole—big or little."

"Yes, exactly the same," said the manager. "Well, then, I'll save a quarter," and putting my fingers in the holes I quickly made the two into one.

I gave up my job about that time.

You see the manager said he was sure I had missed my vocation, and that I could make better jokes than cloth.



Say, I met an old friend down in Wall Street to-day.

He is connected with the government in some way, and has traveled extensively over the world.

But he looked forlorn, and I knew something had happened to cloud his usual bright spirits.

"Well, colonel, what's gone wrong—lost your job?" I asked.

He shook his head and smiled sadly.

"It isn't a death in the family?" I suggested.

"Not at all. You couldn't guess in a year. Listen!"

It was a harrowing tale he unfolded, and under cover it was stamped with the wing of truth.

During his travels he had rubbed elbows with a

high muck-a-muck in London, and recently he received word that in memory of the times they had hobnobbed together, an African monarch had invested him with the Grand Isabaski Tapo Order of Merit.

My friend, anxious to display the decorations at the earliest opportunity, applied at once to the proper authorities for permission to wear it, in Washington.

While readily granting the permission the secretary inquired, with the ghost of a smile:

"Do you know what the order is like?"

"Certainly," replied the delighted applicant. "It is a beautiful gold ring, and hanging from it is a small red enamel pipe of peace. I should like to wear it."

"Of course we grant you full permission, but, according to the law on the subject of foreign medals, you have to wear it as it is worn by the natives of Africa."

"And how is that?" asked the colonel.

"Why, the ring through the nose!" said the secretary.

And that was why the funeral was sad.



I didn't blame him one bit.

Why the people of this republic don't know one half of the ridiculous statutes on the books.

The colonel I remember had an Irish servant at one time who had been with him many years.

He was very fond of Roy.

So were we all.

At the time I was quartered in Washington, and being on terms of intimacy with the colonel frequently accepted his warm invitation to spend an evening with him.

Roy had a dog of which he was very fond.

One day I saw him out walking without his usual humble companion.

"Hello, Roy," I remarked, "where's Nicodemus?"

They called the dog Nicodemus because he came in the night, you see.

"Sure, the poor baste is dead," whined Roy, a tear sparkling in his eye.

For he loved the bow-legged canine dearly.

"Why, this is sudden. Was he shot?" I asked.

"Not he, sir."

"Poisoned?"

"Well, I dunno, he swallowed a tape measure."

"Oh! it was a tape worm then. I suppose he died by inches, Roy."

"Begorra, he did not—he just wint round to the back ov the house, laid doʋn and died be the yard."

The other day a friend of mine was holding out in an usual eloquent manner concerning an incident which had occurred during his last trip abroad.



It was a mixed company around him, for you see we were holding a primary at the time.

"Only those who have been roused from midnight slumber while tossed on the bosom of the broad Atlantic by the terrible cry of 'Man overboard,'" said my friend impressively, "can comprehend to the full its terrible meaning; the fear and horror of its sudden alarm."

"I differ with you there," said a little lame shoe-maker who was never much of a traveler, "because I heard it once when I wasn't on shipboard and yet I'm of the opinion I realized its horror more than any one else."

"That's impossible," said my friend, bristling up.

"Well, I guess you wouldn't say so if you'd been in my condition," remarked the other, quietly, "for you see I was the man who was overboard."

My friend saw the point.

He was with me up in the country on a certain occasion, and an angry bumble bee chased him madly across the meadow.

After I had plastered some mud back of his ear where the wicked sting had raised a lump about as big as a walnut, I thought it kind of pleasant to remark:

"By the way, wasn't it only last week I heard you speaking good words for the honest little honey gatherers?"

"I said a fellow could learn a great deal from them," says he, still panting.

"Well, have you changed your mind?"

"Not at all, only just object to taking points from them, that's all," he growled.

And I thought him a sensible man, wouldn't you?

I saw a funny thing in court the other day. An old fellow was charged with robbery.

The prosecuting lawyer proved very clearly that the prisoner had committed the theft.

The judge pronounced sentence of six months.

Then the old fellow got mad.

"Look at this from a scientific point of view," he cried. "I didn't commit this robbery. It was my arm



that did it. My head was all right, but the temptation was too great for my arm to resist."

"Very well," said the judge, who was a bit of a humorist, "we will sentence your arm to six months. You can keep it company or not, as you desire."

A titter went round, but it changed to an explosive laugh when the old fellow says:

"Thank you kindly, your honor."

Then he unscrewed his cork arm, left it in custody of the court and stalked out.

A year before, this same burglar was arrested, confined in jail and managed to scale the walls.

What do you think, the sheriff received a letter from him the next day, which began after this style:

"Dear Sir:—I hope you will excuse the liberty I have taken."

I was waiting in a law office yesterday when the door opened.



A little girl walked in.

She was sobbing bitterly.

"Hello, my child, what's wrong?" I asked.

"Is that your sign on the door?" she continued, still in tears, and pointing to the gold letters which

told how some poor devil for a consideration engaged to secure separations without publicity.

"Of course. Now what can I do for you?" I asked.

"I want"—sob—"I want a divorce from my pa and ma."

But a present of a nickel to buy an orange soothed her. Somehow, I'm anxious about that child.

I fear she may some day grow up to become an actress.

Talking of lawyers, I saw one of the cult get out of patience not long ago.

The case was attempted murder.

The witnesses were unusually dumb, or else they were loath to relate all they knew.

At any rate the prosecuting attorney was at his wits' end.

Finally he thought to prove his point by cornering one fellow who had been on the spot at the time the first of the two shots were fired.

"You admit you heard the both shots fired?" yelled the lawyer.

"I do."

"How near the participants were you standing?"

"Well, when the first shot was fired I was about twelve feet away from the two men."

"Ah, yes," said the attorney, "and would you be pleased to tell the Court how far you were at the time the second shot was fired?"



"Really, sir, I couldn't say."

"Why not?"

"Because I had no means of measuring the distance."

"Oh, well, we don't bind you down to feet and inches, just tell the jury, my man, approximately, how far you would say."

"Well, I should imagine it was almost a quarter of a mile. I'm a pretty good runner, you know."

How was that for a lightning calculator?

He would do for a quick change artist, I believe.

Another case came up where an Irishman was suing for bodily damages.

A lawyer took him in hand.

I'd seen this same lawyer make men believe black was white on other occasions and anticipated that he would swing Mr. O'Grady round to his way of thinking without any particular trouble.

"Now, Mr. O'Grady," said he, "when you told the defendant you wanted your bill paid, did he not throw out a suggestion that you were rude and threatening,

and did it not open the door to a scuffle, which you describe as an assault?"

"No, sor," said the man who had sued for damages, "all that the defendant throwed out was meself, sor, and there was no door opened at all, at all, for, bedad, I wint out by the winḍy."



That child-like blandness of Mr. O'Grady had its effect upon the jury, his humor lightened the load those twelve unfortunate men had to bear, and they showed their appreciation by giving him the full damages.

Now, perhaps all those legal gentlemen who plead in that court were not worthy of medals on account of their good looks, but I hardly think they deserve the back-handed compliment I heard.

A countryman forced his way in.

"Waal, I swan, but them air a precious tough-lookin' crowd o' criminals. If I was the judge I'd have 'em all shot on sight," he said.

"Hold on," remarked his friend, "the prisoners aint come in yet. That bunch of men is the lawyers squabbling over their cases."

That set me to thinking.

I wondered what sort of a world we would have anyhow, if the lawyers were all strung up.

I ran across an old acquaintance yesterday on the street.



That was Julep, who does business down Broadway.

"How is everything?" I asked.

"Why, business of all kinds seems good," he replied.

"Just so. I've noticed that even the metal trade is on the jump, and that there's a boom in canyons."

Julep laughed.

Still, I could see the poor man looked disconsolate.

"Anything wrong down your way?" I asked.

"The deuce to pay. I'm tormented with columns of figures and accounts payable."

"Say, don't tell me that bright cashier has left you, Julep."

"Well, it's the truth. He took everything else."





I pretended to be very serious.

And Julep failed to see it was a trap.

"Well, I'll be hanged if some men can ever take a joke," he said in disgust.

Julep is an enthusiast at wheeling.

Why, he's scoured the country within fifty miles of Gotham, and is the proud originator of a dozen cycling clubs.

He coaxed me into one and I paid my five dollars like a little man.

Speedily, thanks to the energetic efforts of the president and treasurer, the club was in a flourishing condition, both numerically and financially.

There was an unaccountable delay however, in fixing a day for the opening "run," and one morning I met the president on the street and buttonholed him.

"How about that first run?" I remarked. "When's it coming off?"

"It has come off," was the unexpected reply of the president.

"What I never received any notification, and——"

"Well, you see," explained the president, "it was somewhat hurriedly arranged. As a matter of fact, only one member took part in it."

"How on earth can you call that a club run?" I demanded.

"Well, perhaps it would be more appropriate to call it the treasurer's run. He's run off with my bike, and the badges, medals, and funds of the club, and we have no information as to the route he chose."

Julip doesn't sing so loud now when we talk of biking tours, for his spirit is chastened.

But, by the way, talking of singing recalls an incident that happened while I was looking at some valuable lots.

They had jumped up to a tremendous price.

"Just think of it," I said to Saxby, who was figuring on buying a few inches to square his holding; "this land is now worth three hundred dollars a foot! And only a year ago I could have bought it for a mere song."



"Oh, yes, but you couldn't sing, eh?" laughed Saxby.

"Oh, that wasn't the trouble," I retorted, "I could sing all right, but you see I was unable to get the right notes."

"Say, boss, aint yer going to give a dime to a poor blind man?" whined a

beggar at the curb while I was talking with a friend. It was down on the Bowery, you know, where freaks are so common they sometimes break into museums and get on exhibition.

"Why, you old fraud!" exclaimed my friend, "you're only blind in one eye."

He never turned a hair.

"All right, boss," he chirped, "make it a nickel then."

This friend, with whom I held sweet converse on the historic Bowery, chanced to be ambitious in the line of authorship, so being sympathetic by nature, I proposed to encourage him.

"Say, d'ye see that squatty individual over yonder? Well he's just succeeded in selling a magazine an article for something like two thousand dollars, I'm told."

I never even winked as I said this.

"You don't say! Lucky man. But, do you know, judging from his looks I'd think he was the agent of a brewery rather than a gifted writer."

"Writer—who said he was that?" I demanded.

"Why, see here, didn't you just tell me he had sold an article to a magazine for an enormous sum?"



"Yes."

"Well, don't that stamp him a writer of no mean merit?"

"I don't know. The article he sold was a printing press."

This party I had somehow fallen into the way of terming a "chance acquaintance," and my wife manifesting an undue curiosity regarding the reason for so terming him, I dismissed the subject by saying:



"Well, you see, I first met him while buying a lottery ticket."

Speaking of my wife reminds me that when our last cook suddenly left us we were treated to numerous wonderful dishes gleaned from her cookery-school reminiscences.

Some I enjoyed.

Others—well, what's the use dragging the family skeleton before the rude gaze of the public.

"What do you think of the dessert, dear?" remarked the missus, sweetly, one evening. "I made it out of Mrs. Parboil's cookery book."



"Oh, that accounts for it," I said, relieved. "I suppose it's the leather binding that makes it so tough."

When my wife's mother was with us last, she gave me a splendid opening for a few of those good old well-seasoned mother-in-law jokes.



And the old lady took them in pretty good part, too.

It was well she did.

One would be foolish to quarrel with one's bread and butter.



No jokes, no bones, and consequently no grub.

Which would be the reverse of humorous, I think.

My wife's ancestor keeps up with all the latest fads, and hardly a day passed without them springing something new on me.

But one day while I was enjoying my ease, Glara suddenly startled me by saying:

"What do you think, dear, mother says she wants to be cremated."

"All right," I replied instantly, "tell her to get ready and I'll take her right now."



That joke cost me heavily.

Like most of the good wives, my better half has by degrees grown extremely neglectful in connection with the small affairs of the household.

That good old motto "It's never too late to mend" has quite gone out of fashion.

However, I manage to give a good rap occasionally, just to let her know I'm on to her failings.

Said she one evening:

"I've just been reading an article on electricity, Joseph, and it appears that before long we shall be able to get pretty well everything we want by just touching a button."



"You'd never be able to get anything that way," I remarked.

"Why not, my dear?"

"Because," I said, solemnly, "nothing on earth would ever induce you to touch a button. Look at my shirt."

Now that I think of it, one of the first efforts at humor of which I was ever guilty, was directed at my good wife.

She's had to stand oceans of it since.

It was a long time ago.

"Tell me," she said, cuddling up to me after the fashion all little wives have when anticipating a present, for this was the seventh anniversary of our marriage, "tell me, what was really the happiest moment of your life?"



I knew mighty well what she was expecting, but some insane spirit caused me to become suddenly humorous, and thus lay the foundation for my present dark and misguided condition, for no one believes me under oath now.

"Ah, dear," I said, "I remember it well. I shall never forget it. If I live to be a hundred years old that moment will always stand out as plainly as it does to-night."

"Yes, but, dearest, you have not told me when it was?"



"Oh, I thought you had guessed it," I remarked. "Surely, it ought to be perfectly easy for you to do so. Well, then, it was when you came to me last autumn, if you remember, and told me you had decided to trim

over one of your old hats so as to make it do for the winter."

Then the celebration of the seventh anniversary of our marriage became formal and uninteresting.

Perhaps I have not always been the devoted husband I should have been to my spouse.

But I am glad to say it never occurred to me to deceive her as grossly as Breckenridge does his wife.

I got on to the racket by chance.

Goodness knows how many other supposedly devoted husbands are banded together to play the same game.

I chanced to be standing talking to Breck in a sub-station of the post office, when I noticed that he held in his hand a postal card which he was about to mail.

What surprised me was the fact that the thing was addressed by typewriter to Breckenridge himself.

"Say, what sort of a confidence game is on?" I asked, always eager for information.



"Read it," he replied, smiling.

So I did, and with his name filled in, the printed card was as follows:

"Brother Breckenridge :

"There will be a meeting of the I. O. O. S. B., No. 387, at the Hall, the evening of Friday next, to transact special business. Members not present will be fined ten dollars. Samuel Quigg, Secretary."

"Yes; but I don't exactly catch on," I remarked.

"You don't? Well, I got the cards printed myself. The society is all a myth. When I want to get out of an evening I have one of these cards directed to my house. I reach home and my wife hands it to me with a sigh. I offer to stay at home, and stand the fine of ten dollars; but, of course, she won't allow it. That's all, my friend, except that the scheme is worked by hundreds of others, and our poor deluded wives haven't tumbled to it yet."

I was shocked beyond measure.

Why, I don't see how that man can ever look his trusting wife in the eyes, do you?

At the same time I'm willing to admit the trick might be pardonable in some cases.

There's Penrycook, for instance, who never knows an hour's peace while at home—you couldn't blame the poor fellow for yearning that he might get an evening off.



I'll never forget the time I was at his house, when the doctor called to see his wife, who imagined she was ill.

"Now, Mrs. Penhycook," said the old physician, holding his little temperature tester coaxingly, "just oblige me by holding this thermometer under your tongue five minutes, and keep your lips tightly closed."

I saw little Penhycook survey the operation with wide-open eyes and speechless delight.

Five minutes of bliss followed.

And later on he buttonholed the doctor, a look of eager ambition in his eyes.

"Say, how much will you take for that instrument, Doc?" I heard him ask.

Evidently the poor little hen-pecked fellow had reached the conclusion that a temperature thermometer was an absolute necessity, and that no household could be complete without one.

I heard how Penhycook once upon a time made a gallant attempt to assert his authority as the head of his household.

Of course it was an ignominious failure, and yet it deserves to be recorded.



There had been a great row between them, and the lady's tongue lashed him good and strong.

Perrycook finally burst out with :

"Hang it, a woman is just like an envelope."

"In what way, sir?" she demanded.

He was mad clear through, I guess, or he would never have dared make so brazen a break.

"Because neither of them can be shut up until licked."

But the poor fellow's downfall dated from that hour, and now he sneezes when Mrs. Perrycook takes snuff.

Yes, domestic scenes of all kinds interest me.



I'm particularly delighted, you know, when the monthly bills come in.

It takes such an interesting lot of figuring to know whether I'll have enough of my stipend left over to buy a five cent cigar.

I'm not the only chap who worries in that way.

Even bachelors have their woes.



I met Jack Esterbrook on the car the other night and he had a disgusted look about him.

"Hello!" I said, "I thought you were walking home every evening for exercise."

He snorted at me.

"Exercise? Well, I believe I did give you that gag, but to tell the truth I gave up smoking and did this little walk every night to save a few dollars a month," he said.

"That's a clever idea. I suppose it worked."

He shook his head sadly.

"No use trying to economize. Save at the spigot and waste at the bung-hole."

"What do you mean, my dear boy?" I demanded.

"Why, hang it, you see, giving up tobacco and taking such a bracer morning and night must have increased my appetite, for I've received notice from my landlord that from now on my board will be raised, and the difference is just what I've saved a month."



My heart went out to poor Jack.

He had certainly gotten himself into a bad scrape.

While I am harping upon these domestic woes, let me tell you in strict confidence how my wife got a good joke off of me.

I've enjoyed it many a time, especially when surveying my handsome phiz in a mirror.



It was years ago.

Our last boy was a wee bit of a chap at the time, and could just sputter goo-goo and such intelligent phrases so dear to the hearts of fond mothers.

And one evening I got it direct.

My wife was full of good humor and I could see she was pleased as soon as I came home.

"What's happened?" I asked, for do you know I'm always indulging in the most ridiculous daydreams, in which some mythical rich old relative dies and leaves me a few hundred thousand.

But it was better news than that.

"Such a delightful thing





has happened. Baby talks. He has just said his first words to-day," cried my wife.

"Hurrah! that is worth coming home to hear. Tell me all about it, darling," I said, enthusiastically.

"Well," said she, "we were in Central Park this afternoon—you remember the wonderful ape, that mandril, do they call him, the one with the blue nose. I had just stopped in front of his cage, when baby, the little darling, caught sight of him grinning at us.

"I thought the precious thing would be frightened, but would you believe it, he just held out his chubby hands toward the monkey and actually spoke."



"He did, the darling. 'Er—by the way, what did he say, dear?'"

"As near as I could make out it was, 'Ah, papa!'"

I took it good-naturedly.

And yet ever since I always have a queer sensation whenever I visit the monkey cages in the park.

Perhaps there is an affinity, who knows?

That was a dozen years back.

Harold is now in his teens.

He dearly loves to read.

Just the other night while we were all sitting

around the room engaged in various ways, I asked him:

"What's that you're reading?"

"A bully good sea story—about a fellow who was wrecked on a cape," he replied.

I became intensely interested.

"Read it out loud," I said. "I can truly sympathize with the poor fellow, and perhaps it may be possible to pick up a few hints from his experience, because, you see, I've been pretty nearly wrecked myself on a cape—a sealskin."

Harold, although the youngest, shows signs already that give me much anxiety.

I'm afraid the seeds of a humorist lie dormant in his nature, and that some day he may convulse nations.



On one occasion I know he looked up from his book and said soberly:

"May I ask you a question, pa?"

"Why, to be sure—a dozen if you like."

"Do ghosts converse in the dead languages?"

I told him there could be no doubt about it.

At the same time, since I have been attending

spiritual seances of late in search of new jokes from the other world, I don't like to talk shop too much.



Some people object to bringing their business into touch with their pleasures.

And yet I find a difference of opinion.

You would understand how circumstances alter cases could you have been with me the other night and overheard the delightful little conversation between two girl friends that floated to me between the spasms of music in the park.

They were, I judge, girls who had to work for their daily bread, yet both were well dressed, and I took quite a fatherly interest in their sweet confidences.

For of course the subject of their conversation was the wise and witty sayings, the charms of manner, and the other admirable traits of character possessed by their respective sweethearts.

"Don't you like to have anybody talk shop when they come to see you?" gurgled Mary.

"Indeed I do. Who's been talking shop to you?"

"Oh, Charlie, of course! He's a conductor of the

Broadway cars you know, and nearly every time he comes to see me he goes on with his shop talk."

"What does he say?"

"Sit closer, please!"

Wasn't that charming frankness for you?

I feel pretty sure where Charlie's arm must have been at the time he talked shop.

That makes me recall a little chat I had with Miss Gartaret at the musicale the other night.

She's one of your twentieth century girls for fair.



Goes in for a strology, Dowieism, Bucolicology and a dozen other ologies.

I tell you a fellow has to keep on his mettle when sitting out an hour with that bright woman.

I had been fairly serious all evening, that is for me, and the time came when I had to fall back on my natural reserve forces.

Indeed, the boiler would have burst if something didn't open an escape valve soon.

"Do you know anything about palmistry, or the science of reading hands?" she asked me.

It was a square question.

I could not dodge or hedge.

"A little," I admitted, modestly, "not a great deal perhaps, though I had an experience last night which might be considered a remarkable example of the art you allude to."

"You don't mean it!" she said, delighted.

"Yes. I happened to glance at the hand of a friend of mine, and I immediately predicted that he would presently become the possessor of a considerable sum of money. Before he left the room he had more than thirty dollars handed to him."

"And you told it just from his hand?" she cried, her eyes sparkling.

"Yes. He had the ace, king, queen, knave, and ten of hearts; swept the board."

The lady shushes me now.

When I was doing an exhibition of painting recently she gave me the coldest nod, and hurried to the other end of the gallery.

Strange how some people have so little sense of humor.



Why, I actually believe she thinks I meant all that about the cards, and put me down as a regular gambler.

My wife enjoyed those paintings quite as much as I did.

We were greatly attracted by one in particular, so realistic that one could imagine the scene was actually spread before him.



I grew enthusiastic.

"This is what I call genuine art," I said. "I have been told that the artist once painted some cobwebs on his ceiling so truthfully that the housemaid wore herself into an attack of nervous prostration trying to brush them down."

"There may be such an artist, dear," my good wife murmured softly, as she gripped my arm tighter, "but such a housemaid—*never!*"

At the exhibition of paintings, I met my old friend Graigie, who had several pretty fair pictures in line.

He said he had a very homely man sit for him recently, and having faithfully executed his part of the contract, Graigie showed the completed picture.



The man was inclined to be sarcastic.

"You call that a portrait?" said he, "why, it's simply a red beet, that's what, with a couple of cabbage leaves for ears."

Now some men would have shown temper, but Graigie knew how to hold himself in check.

"Well," said he, "it's your own fault, sir. You would insist on having a likeness."

I doubt whether he will collect his fee without a law suit, and he says it will be worth it to exhibit that picture in court, and get the opinion of a jury.

Graigie also told me how he had, from mere curiosity, dropped in at an auction where works of art were being sold under the hammer at ridiculously low prices.

One gem of purest ray serene had been put up, but it was so atrocious that only a single bid of a quarter of a dollar had been made.

The auctioneer, after his kind, waxed indignant, and berated the crowd as lacking in artistic temperament.

He knew Graigie and picked him out.

"I'm only offered a quarter for this fine painting of the dogs. Why, gentlemen, this is heart-breaking. Think of the time and paint that has been expended upon this picture. Mr. Graigie, I am surprised at you for not raising such a ridiculous bid. Why, gentlemen, think of it—only a quarter—bless your innocent souls, the canvas is worth that alone."



"Yes, but the canvas is spoilt now," said Graigie.

A good many things are spoilt, it seems to me, by ambitious aspirants after fame.

But when I think of it, I cannot recall any incident of this character more touching than the sacrifice made by our old village blacksmith some years ago.

It is not many men who would endure what that noble man did for the sake of future glory.

The old man and his son were great dog fanciers.

It seems that the boy secured possession of a bull pup, and was exhausting every known device to teach the beast his various tricks.

Finally he induced the old man to go down on all fours, and imitate the bull.





Promptly enough the canine pupil pinned the old man tentaciously by the nose.

Delighted with the success of his scheme, and disregarding the old gentleman's bellowing, the son shouted and clapped his hands.

"Hold him, Growler, hold him," he called. "Stand it, dad, stand it like a man, for it'll be the making' of the pup!"

The boys in that village are not dumb by any means.

I found this out on several occasions.

Once I managed to get twisted in my bearings while out wheeling, and was in doubt whether to keep on or turn around.

A lad came along.

"I say, my boy, can you tell me how far it is to Kensington?" I asked him.

The little chap grinned at me.

"Well, you see, the way yer pointin' it's about twenty-five thousand miles away, but if ye turn back, mister, I kinder guess ye'll be there in ten minutes."



While I was watching my friend the blacksmith shoe a horse, one of the village smarties lounged in.

I knew from his looks he had a card up his sleeve.

Presently, in speaking of a certain young bullock that was in an adjoining paddock, he said:

"That's a pretty hefty critter you've got there, Mr. Sledge.

I'll bet you the drinks I can tell his weight as near as you can."

The blacksmith, who was an expert in this thing, laughed in scorn.

"Humbug. What d'ye know about the heft o' animals, Bagley?" he said.

"Never you mind. What weight do you say he is?"

"Well, now, I say six hundred and fifty."

"All right. Now, I say he's just six hundred and fifty pounds, too. Singular, how near we agree. And let's have the drinks, Sledge, old boy, for I guessed the weight as near as you did."

That wasn't bad for a country joker.

Close by that village lived a farmer by the name of Davison.





He had sent his boy to college, but the fellow wasted his time there, and was recalled home.

It was his policy to make more or less of a showing before the old man, just to prove the superiority of the college bred animal.

So, one day, as they came together out near the rear of the barn, where the horse and cart stood, the old man took his son confidently by the arm.

"Now, Josiah, here is a pitchfork, and here is a heap of manure and a cart. What do you call them in latin?"

"Forkibus, cartibus, et manuribus," said Josiah, without winking, because he knew the old man wouldn't know the difference.

"Well, now," said the old man, "if you don't take that forkibus pretty quickibus, and pitch that manuribus into the cartibus, I'll break your lazy backibus."



Josiah went to his workibus forthwithibus, so I was told.

Crackin' jokes is all very good, but to me there is something especially funny in unconscious humor.

Let me illustrate.

It happened in the little schoolhouse connected with that same little village.

I had dropped in to see the teacher, and watch him teach the young idea how to shoot.

Between us, I've always thought that expression very appropriate, because they tell us that in all future conflicts the man behind the gun will decide battles on sea as well as on land.



Now, the dominee was explaining the lesson.

"For instance," he said, "the word 'stan' at the end of a word means 'place of.' Thus we have Afghanistan, the place of the Afghans; also Hindustan, the place of the Hindus. Now, can anyone give me another instance?"

"Yes, sir," said the smallest boy, proudly, "I can. Umbrellastan, the place of umbrellas."

That wasn't the only good morsel I've picked up within the sacred precincts of the temple of learning.

I remember doing a little something in that line myself when going to an academy.

The old professor was discussing the organic and inorganic kingdoms, and he was great at illustrating.

"Now, young gentlemen, if I should shut my eyes—so—drop my head—so—and should not move, you would say I was a clod! But I move, I leap, I run, I hop; then what do you call me?"

That was up to me.



And on the spur of the moment what could I say, but:

"A clod-hopper, sir."

But it cost me an interview after school, which I always considered a burning shame.

I've found by bitter experience that many serious-minded persons in this world consider it a solemn duty to discourage the slightest tendency on the part of an exuberant youthful spirit to extract a little fun out of life.

On my part I encourage it.

Why, I could not live without joking.

Just this morning I was overtaken by Gregory, a new acquaintance.

"Saw you at church last Sunday," he remarked.

"That so?"

"Stunning-looking lady with you, by Jove!"

"Glad you think so," I replied.

"May I ask who she was?"

"Only a relation by marriage."

"Oh! beg pardon. I thought perhaps it was your wife."

"Well, so it was," I said, soberly.

And he stared at me fully ten seconds before he saw where the joke came in.

Then he laughed real loud.

I like that genuine, explosive laugh, for it assures a hard-working humorist that he has driven his bolt home to the socket.



"Oh! that's what you're up to, is it," said Gregory; "now, do you know I'm something of a sly joker, myself, when I find a decent subject to practice on."

"How about your wife?" I asked.

"She gave me warning long ago. It was either to



curb my propensity or be marched to the divorce court."

"Well, try it on me. I'm a cheerful subject," I said.

"All right, I will. By the way, do you know that tall gentleman across the street?"

"Nope. What is he, a minister?"



"Good gracious! Why, that man is probably the most scientific boxer in New York."

"You don't say."

"Yes. That's Steve Merritt, the undertaker."

I was real glad I had met Gregory.

Plainly he would prove quite an acquisition to my useful circle of acquaintances.

He turned out to be a traveling man.

Half of his time is spent on the road.

I feel sympathetic, because when a man is away from the bosom of his family he is never the same.

"And Mrs. Gregory, I suppose she misses you a great deal?" I remarked.



"Well, now, to tell you the truth, I

must say no to that—for a woman she has a really remarkable straight aim."

There was a suggestiveness about that, and I changed the subject abruptly.

"How's business?" I asked.

"Business seems to be good enough," he said. "In my line there are nuts to crack always. And yet you can find even in the most prosperous of times that there are some unfortunate failures. For instance, right across the street you will see a poor fellow whose business has driven him to the wall."

It was a bill poster at work putting up the gaudy sheets of the big circus.



As we walked on we got into a crowd.

It had threatened rain, and I had an umbrella under my arm.

"Say," said a fellow just behind, "that umbrella you're carrying keeps poking me in the ribs, sir."

That was a golden opportunity to show my superior breeding.

Some men would have fired up and indulged in spicy language, real exotic stuff, you know.



I simply turned my head and said :

"Well, what if it is, don't abuse me for it, sir. It isn't my umbrella. Suppose you go and kick the man I borrowed it from."



A soft answer turneth away wrath.

If you can make a man laugh he seems to lose all desire to bathe in your heart's blood.

"We've got a dandy book-keeper down at our place," remarked Gregory, when we secured seats in the elevated.

"That's good."

"She's certainly original."

"In what way?" I asked.

"In many particulars. For instance, we have an account with the District Messenger Service, and use their boys frequently to do errands. Would you believe it, she had the dry humor to head the page devoted to their accounts as 'Running Expenses.'"

Gregory, as I told you, is a traveling man, but I bet he don't come up to old Bob Smith, one of the most high-toned men in the business.

Old Bob Smith is a veteran on the road, and always delights to jolly a new man.

On one occasion, seeing a green young traveler enter the room, he told his friend to prepare for fun.

"For whom do you travel?" inquired Smith.

"Noses," replied the young fellow.

"Moss & Co., the tailors?"

"No, no. Noses—human noses."

"No one will sell his nose."

"Oh, yes. We pay cash down, and don't require delivery until death."

"Will you pay me cash down and not require delivery until I'm dead?"

"Yes; a nose like yours is worth one hundred dollars."

"Done," said Smith. "One hundred dollars down, and either party refusing to complete the bargain forfeits glasses all round."

"Agreed," said the young fellow, at the same time putting the poker in the fire.



"What is that for?" asked Smith, suspiciously.

"Oh," remarked the young fellow, "we always mark our goods, when purchased, to prevent mistakes."

The bargain was not completed, and Smith stood glasses round.

By the way, do you ever go to Central Park of a fine day and gallop along the bridle paths—I don't mean the bridal routes taken by young couples, but those given over to the horses?



It's a fine and exhilarating exercise for those whose taste runs that way.

Now, I am a little of a horseman myself, not much to brag about, but I do like a prancing steed.

Perhaps one of my remote ancestors was one of those old Gentians we read about.

At any rate I have no sympathy for timidity on the part of a man in connection with his mount.

On this occasion an effeminate-looking dude, dressed with scrupulous exactness for a gallop, beckoned to one of the men.

I overheard what followed, and I give you my word I wouldn't have missed it for a good deal.

Evidently our little man was nervous.



"Me good fellow, tell me, have you a vewy quiet horse? Wemember, it must be like a lamb, don't you know, and neither kick, nor shy, nor gallop too fast."

Mike surveyed him with contemptuous mien.

"Sure," he said, finally, "we have thot. Which will you have, guv'nor, a clothes horse or a rockin' horse?"

It was that same Mike who told me a strange story about the wonderful feat of a man who came there to get a ridin' horse.

If you will pardon me, I'll give it as he related it.

"He was thot bonny ye'd think he was Napoleon, and his feet, begob, I swear he niver cud be gettin' shoes unless they was made to ordher.

"And mighty particular he wor about the beast, looking over the whole stable till he finally selected a buckskin rag the boss was after callin' Pegasus, but why, I dunno.

"I'll have that one," sez he.

"The boss begged off.

"Sure," sez he, 'there ain't the mon living able to ride thot bast He do work foine in a cart or at



the plow, but sorry a rider will he let stay on his back. We're only waitin' for the Wild West Show again, to let Buffalo Bill's cowboys thrum him.'

"'Put a saddle on him,' sez the mo'."

"Well, we did the same, an' he jumped aboard."



"I was ready to take the oath he'd go off quicker nor he went on, but the cunning baste twisted his head round, took wan look at them great feet, an' trotted off as docile as a lamb, sure."

"You say, he thought he wor between a pair av shafts!"

Speaking of horseback riding, one morning I introduced a friend of mine to accompany me on a jaunt through the Park, an' some of the newer sections of Harlem.

As we galloped along we naturally enlivened the time with an exchange of wit.

As we cantered through a certain section, my friend remarked.

"They seem to put up houses in this neighborhood very quickly."

"Not so fast as they used to do before the build-

ing regulations were made more stringent. They take more than a week now," I said, calmly.

"Look here, do you mean to say any of these houses have been built even in less time than a week?" he demanded, scornfully.

"Rather! You noticed that yellow house we just passed? Well, I remember one morning while I was out riding, seeing the men digging a hole——"

"I suppose that was for the foundation?"

"Yes. In the morning they began at the foundation, and the same night there was a row in the street."

"What was it about?" he asked, suspiciously.

"The police were throwing out the tenants for arrears of rent!"

He grinned and went on:

"By the way, we had a little excitement in our flat last evening. I don't think I mentioned it to you."

"There are a good many things you fail to mention to me, my friend. For instance, that five dollars you borrowed two weeks ago," I suggested.

"Oh! I made a note of that and will pay in time—time's money you know."



"That's kind of you. But about this excitement—was it a fire in your apartments?"

"No."

"Attempted burglary?" I suggested.

"Hardly that; at least it never occurred to me to give it such a name."

"Well, what then?"



"My wife came to me, badly rattled, and declared the baby had gone and swallowed a piece of worsted from her fancywork basket."

"And I suppose you said 'darn the luck?'"

"No, I didn't. I took it as coolly as you please.

"'My dear,' I said to her, having you in mind, my humorous friend!"

"Me—the idea!"

"'My dear,' I said, 'don't worry. She won't be worsted by such a small thing, and besides that's nothing to the yarns she'll have to swallow if she lives to grow up and know a man who is a monologist.'"

That was bright, wasn't it?

Talk about bright! Did I ever tell you about my friend Stunson's little boy?

No? Well, now, I'll have to stop long enough to give you a hint of that extraordinary youngster.

He's a great one, I'm telling you. I was in there the other day, and quite enjoyed the little domestic drama that was unrolled before me.

You may not know, but for some time I've noticed what queer questions they ask the pupils at school.

Why, my boy has sprung some of the strangest things on me you ever heard.

Well, it seems that on this particular day Mrs. Stunson noticed a shortage in her supply of pies baked the day before, and her suspicion fell upon Karl.

"Karl," said she, "do you know what became of that cherry pie that was on the second shelf in the pantry?"

"Yes, mother," he replied, like a little George Washington, "I ate it. But I had to."

"You had to!" exclaimed his astonished mother. "What do you mean, child?"

"The teacher asked yesterday if any of us could tell how many stones there are in a cherry pie, and I couldn't find





out without eating the whole pie, could I? There's just forty-two," he said, pulling the lot out of his pocket.

That isn't the first time I've known Karl to get into trouble with some of his mamma's property.

Not long ago I had some business with Stunson, and was sitting in the parlor while he hunted up some papers stored away in a bedroom closet, when I heard his wife say, out in the dining room:

"Oh! Karl, who opened the canary's cage?"

He was the same little George Washington then, and he acknowledged the corn just like a little man.

"I did," he said, stoutly. "You told me a little bird was a-whispering to you when I was naughty, so I

knew it must be him, as there wasn't any other little bird about. So I opened the cage, and the cat's eat him up. That's what he gets for tellin' on me."

I suppose he paid the penalty, poor little chap. He's of an inquiring mind, too. Stunson once told me he went to his mother when he was smaller and said:

"Mamma, my birthday comes this year on a Monday, don't it?"



"Yes, dear."

"And last year it was on a Sunday, wasn't it?"

"Yes," replied his mother.

"Did it come on Saturday the year before last?"

"Yes, dear."

"Mamma," said the little puzzled philosopher, "tell me how many days in the week was I born on?"

I struck an odd-looking man in Broadway this morning. He was walking along, his head thrown back as though it might be his business to constantly search the heavens.

He had a sort of wild look about him.

I guessed he might be an astronomer.

Then it occurred to me he might be a dealer in windmills—they're always cracking their necks looking up, you know.

I was away off, though the wind had considerable to do with his vocation. The truth is, he was Prof. Jasper, and his hobby was aerial traveling—he's an aeronaut, and he's just mad on balloons—er, what you might term a bal-loonatic.



When I came around to rehearse this morning the manager greeted me with a stare.

"You don't seem to be quite yourself this morning, old man," he said, uneasily.

"That's a fact," I admitted. "You see, I have passed a bad night."

"Not sick, I hope?" he persisted.

"Oh, no."

"Nothing happened to any of your family?"

"They're as well as usual. To tell you the truth, it was the clamor of conscience."

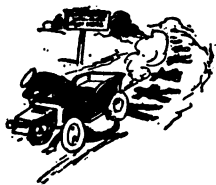
"What! you possessed of a conscience!" he laughed.

"Yes, even I, I will confess. Open confession is good for the soul. Yesterday, in an unguarded moment, I refused a poor woman a request for a small sum of money, and in consequence of my act I passed a wretched night. Why, I tell you, the tones of her voice reproaching me were ringing in my ears the whole time."

"Indeed. And I never gave you credit for such softness of heart. Perhaps you'd better make amends by taking up a collection for the poor woman. I wouldn't mind chipping in a little myself," said the manager, generously.

"Oh! I'm sure she would never consent to any such arrangement," I said, "for though poor she's infernally proud. You see, she's my wife."

I suppose you all ride automobiles. Greatest things I know—for killing people.



A farmer from Jersey who came up to town said he never had time to get a good look at 'em, the pesky things ran over him so fast!

I like those easy-going, rubber-tyred things myself, but I like them kept in their places.

Why, they're superseding horses everywhere. I discovered a piece of rubber tyre in my German sausage the other morning. That's overdoing it, isn't it?

I saw a funny thing down at the restaurant where I get my lunch.

A policeman went in ahead of me.

The proprietor and two waiters had a seedy-looking customer cornered—he was coolly picking his teeth.

"See here, what's the matter?" asked the cop.

The man smiled amiably as he replied:

"Why, you see, I asked this man here who runs



this place if I could eat one of his regular dinners without any trouble, and he said I could."

"Go on," said the policeman.

"Well, I ate one, and as I ain't got any money to pay for it, seems like there's all sorts of trouble."

I thought that was pretty good, and I settled his bill myself.

Speaking of restaurants makes me think of the only instance where Henri, who serves at a popular high-toned place in the Tenderloin, was ever known to miss his expected fee.

I saw it done, and must confess the trick was neatly carried out, though I strongly suspected at the time a wager of some sort lay back of it.

The gentleman was wonderfully polite, and had ordered an enormous number of dishes, so that Henri anticipated a generous tip.

Just as the elegant diner was through he beckoned the waiter and politely requested his assistance in donning his overcoat.

Then he addressed the astonished Henri after this fashion:

"You have waited upon me very acceptably, and I have enjoyed my meal thoroughly. You have behaved like a gentleman, and a gentleman you certainly are, notwithstanding your humble occupation."

"I hope, sir," said Henri, quickly, "that I am a gentleman. I always try to be one."

"It is as I suspected," said the polite diner, bowing, "and, being a gentleman, I shall not insult you by offering you money. Perhaps at some time I may be able to reciprocate your courtesy. Till then, farewell."

And he walked out, leaving Henri almost paralyzed.

Henri served the rest of the evening like a man in a dream.

But, while I am on the subject of restaurant, allow me to mention the experience of a friend, who thought he would patronize a French dining house, though perhaps his funds were low for such a luxury.

When he had been served with soup he called the waiter to him and said:

"See here, waiter, I ordered oyster soup, and on my word there isn't a single oyster in the blessed tureen."



"Parðon, m'sieu, but m'sieu must remember his order was for on'y a ha'f porton. The oysters are in the other ha'f."



Gorgilius Mantheboat was telling me about some sights he had seen while abroad.

It pleased him as a true American to laugh at the way royalty was hedged about.

"Why, would you believe me," he said, "some of the royal dwellings were surrounded by guards standing so close together that they reminded me of a fence."

"Sort of picket fence," I inquired.

"Well, you might say in reality palace aids," he added.

"Did you attend any military balls over there?" I asked.

"No. That was what I heard a young girl ask old Gen. Sickles once.

"'Oh, general,' she said, 'tell me, did you ever go to a military ball?'"

"'No, my dear,' the old veteran replied, 'but I once had a military ball come to me; and what do you think, it took my leg right off.'"

Last Sunday I went for a walk with the musical professor here. I stopped suddenly.

"Listen," I said, "what can that noise be? Sounds as though some one were being murdered."

He looked at me pityingly.

"That comes of your sad lack of a musical ear," he said.

"Oh! it does, eh?"

"Yes, the man who hath no music in his soul, is fit for treason, stratagems, and spoils."

"Well, that doesn't touch me. You ought to hear the elegant squeak my shoes give when I walk up the church aisle. Everybody enjoys it. Now, do you mean to tell me that screeching is music?" I demanded.

"Oh! well, some ambitious Patti is having her voice cultivated. You know it is always necessary to do a bit of plowing first," he said.

"Well, I guess they've reached the harrowing stage by this time," I remarked.

Extraordinary man this musical director of ours. Used to be a contortionist years ago, before he took to drink—I mean to music. Wonderfully active old





fellow still. Why, he told me that his legs were so pliable he could kick himself in the back. I couldn't do that, and I'm not half his age.

What's that, professor?

He says I don't need to; that almost anybody would be glad to do the kicking for me.

Now I call that downright uncivil.

But upon reflection I guess I'll let him off with a caution.

The last time I went to Jersey quite a number of things happened.

In the first place, Nora, our Irish kitchen maid started the ball rolling after her usual neat fashion.

I'm not the man to listen at keyholes, but when the ladies raise their voices it's impossible for me to avoid hearing.



And I'm that eager to corral a bit of genuine humor that a whisper is often as good as a shout.

Nora's mistress was in the dining room after breakfast, and she thought it as good a time as any to take Nora to task on account of her shortcomings.



"The dishes you have put on the table of late, Nora," said she, "have been positively dirty. Now, something's got to be done about it."

"Yis, mum; I was thinkin' an' thot mesilf, an' would ye mind, mum, gettin' dark-colored wags?"

That was a good beginning for the day.

My wife asked me to stop in at the butcher's, on my way to the elevated, an' leave an order.

He's quite deaf, poor man, an' sometimes does make the most ridiculous mistakes in consequence.

"Hello!" I said, in my natural tone, "how d'ye find yourself to-day, Mr. Gleaver?"

Apparently he thought I was asking what he had on hand, but imagine how it must have sounded to the alarmed an' nervous lady on whom he waited.

"Pretty well used up," he said, "every rib gone, they've almost tore me to pieces for my shoulders, an' I never had such a run on my legs. I have some liver an' kidneys left, however, or perhaps you'd like a nice slice out of one of my hams."



An' for such a physical wreck to kick the beam at two hundred an' fifty pounds seemed surprising.

I stopped to buy some fruit, and the stand happened to be alongside a Hebrew clothing house.

The proprietor was outside conversing with a friend, and while I did not set out to listen I could not help hearing something that was said.

"That vos bad I hear about your brother, Yacup," said one of the merchants.

"Yes, he vas gone dead."

"How about his morish?"

"Yell, the widow, she gets it pretty all."

"Yot, did he not leave you something?"

"Shust a matter of two hundred tollars."

"Ah! that vos petter than nothing, Ikey."

"Yell, he vos so goot to me, I goes and buys him a memorial stone with de morish."



"You are generous, quite. It is goot. But, mine friend, vot a beautiful diamond I see in your necktie front. It is a jewel."

"Oh, yes, that ish the stone I referred to. Every time I look at it I think of Yacup."

Just then a small edition of the mournful merchant came out of the store and pulled at his father's coat to attract his attention.

"Fader," he said, "a shentleman in de shop wants to know if dot all-wool unshrinkable shirt will shrink?"

"Does id fid him?" demanded the proprietor, promptly.

"No; id is too big."

"Ghen it vill shrink."

I realized on the spot that as merchants the Hebrews can give us all a long lead, and yet come under the wire winners, with ease.

There was a nervous old lady on board the train.

She sat near me, and I could see she was not accustomed to traveling.

When we went through the tunnel she just huddled up in a heap, with her hands over her eyes.

And yet I didn't see anyone try to kiss her.

Perhaps she had been reading all about what wicked pranks are played in these tunnels, especially if the girl happens to be sweet and charming.



We jogged along over the Hackensack meadows at quite a jolting pace.

Her alarm continued to increase.

Finally she leaned over to me, and says she:

"Mister, is this train quite safe?"

"Yes, I consider it quite as safe as a train can be," I replied, for I always like to be polite to elderly females—I know a man who was left a fortune for giving up his seat to a poor-looking, but eccentric millionaire old lady, and I keep hoping lightening may strike me.

"But, supposing there should be a collision," asked the lady, "what would become of me?"

"Well, in that case, madam, it all depends what kind of a life you have lived!" I said, solemnly.

But she did not tumble to the game, and looked at me as though suspecting I had escaped from my keepers.

She would have made a good mother-in-law.

That is, the kind young Bob Crane doubtless had in mind when he sent me a little effusion which he must have ground out with considerable effort.

Well, if you would like me to repeat them, I'm sure I can see no objection, providing the gentleman in the loud check suit over yonder will grant me the floor.

He stood on his head on the wild seashore,

And joy was the cause of the act,

He felt as he never had felt before

Isaiahly glad, in fact.

For in the vessel that left the bay,  
His mother-in-law had sailed,  
To the tropical countries far away,  
Where tigers and snakes prevailed.

I told Bob that if he assiduously cultivated his gift of rhyming for a century or two, he might without doubt produce something that one of our modern publishers would be glad to bring out—for a consideration.



Thank Heaven, his budding genius was frosted.

This ungrateful world will never know how much suffering I have saved it by jumping on Bob's maiden effort so effectually.

But about that train.

A fellow comes to fancy himself very smart, and yet occasionally he finds himself taken down.

I had it done for me neatly enough, and since I mean to take you fully into my confidence, I might as well confess the whole thing.

On this superb railroad there chanced to be what they call block signals about every mile.

I guess an arm is raised whenever a train oc-

cupies the block ahead, and no engineer dares to pass such a warning red signal.

Perhaps we had a lame old train ahead of us.

At any rate we came to a sudden stop again and again, until it did seem as though my patience had run out.

Sighting a member of the train crew passing just when for the fifth time we had jerked up, I called out:

"I say, brakeman, what's the trouble that we pile up in this manner so often? Can you tell me what's up?"



Well, he turned his head, and, looking over his shoulder, actually winked at me while he said:

"The signal."

In front of me I noticed a young couple who were so taken up with each other, that they had no eyes for any other people in the world.

You've seen such people, of course.

Now, you may have been there yourselves, at some time or other.

The fellow or girl who goes through this life without at least one such experience—well, I pity 'em, that's all.

While we were merrily jogging along between blocks as it were, I heard Adonis propound a riddle.

"Can you guess what's the difference between photography and courtship?" he asked.

She couldn't, of course.

And yet I knew from her rising color that she was able to give a pretty good guess.

"Well, I'll tell you. In photography, you know, the negative is developed in the dark room, while courtship is where the affirmative may be developed."

She blushed some more.

But of course she couldn't say a word.

"And," continued the bold youth, slyly squeezing her hand, "I'm coming around to-night to develop an affirmative."

I wished him all success.

He was a fellow after my own heart.

All I regretted was that blocks took the place of tunnels on that particular line.

While I looked out of the car window I saw a couple of tramps cooking coffee in tomato cans at a camp fire.

Somehow one of the





Wearv Willies reminded me of an audacious fellow who lined up at our back door one summer when we lived in the suburbs.

I tell you he was a corker, and he liked to have his joke.

"I called 'ere last summer, mum," he said, "an' yer gave me an old vest. I found a five-dollar bill in that 'ere vest."

"Good gracious!" said my poor wife; "have you brought it back?"

"Well, mum, that thing's been on my mind ever since, an' I've called to-day for another old vest."



When she told me that, I chased that tramp two miles, and forced him to accept half a dollar for his wit.

The joke is, I'm never known to have a five-dollar bill.

And my wife, above all others, should have known that.

I stayed all night with a friend who was a member of the bar.

Being somewhat of a philosopher, I have little trouble in accommodating myself to circumstances, and for that matter to anything else that comes along.

In fact, come to think of it, all my life I have allowed people to ride over me, and make use of me in a thousand different ways.

For a change, let me sing you a little song covering the subject, which explains how useful a good-natured man may be, to others.



Will the orchestra play softly that good old tune of "Monkey Brown?" I want to sing you a little song if you can hear me above the rumble of the big bass drum.

I'm just a living makeshift, and have been so all my life,

And more than ever since I've had a family and wife.

Perhaps it looks as if I've put the cart before the horse,

But life's so upside-down with me, it is my usual course.

As lady's-maid and porter, in the honeymooning days,

My bride soon found me useful in a hundred kinds of ways.

To pull my whiskers for a bell delights  
my baby boy;

So as a makeshift, I assure you,  
life is not a joy.



My knees are hobby horses, to  
amuse my lively twins;



My tender spots attract them  
as a place for sticking pins.  
They snipe me with pea-shoot-  
ers playing Filipino war,  
And load me as a Broadway car to  
crawl about the floor.

Having some time on my hands, I  
accompanied Mr. Grimsby to the local court, where  
he had a case coming off.

It was a breach of promise case.

Somehow men are always tickled to hear the  
evidence in these suits for wasted affection.

Perhaps it's a case of misery likes company with  
some.

They delight to know they are not the only fools  
on this blessed old footstool.

Of course, the lawyers as usual were making all  
sorts of inquisitive remarks, under the plea of getting  
down to rock-bottom facts.

"You say, Miss Hickenlooper," remarked my friend, "that the defendant, when paying visits to your house, frequently sat very close to you?"

"Yes, sir," was the reply, with a blush.

"How close?"

"So close that one chair was all we needed to sit on."

"And you say he put his arm round you?"

"No, I didn't."

"What did you say, then?"

"I said he put both his arms round me."

"What then?"

"He hugged me."

"Very hard?"

"Yes, very hard—so hard that I very nearly had to scream out."

"Why didn't you scream?"

"Because—I didn't." Another blush.

"Come, that's no reason. Be explicit, please. Because what?"

"Because I was afraid he'd stop."

Now, wasn't that a shame to make that modest



young girl confess under oath that she actually enjoyed the experience.

It made me feel mighty glad circumstances never arose to blazon my courtship days to the rude gaze of the world.

One of the witnesses in the case was asked if some incident previously alluded to might not be looked upon in the light of a miracle.



He was a stubborn chap, and persistently denied his belief in miracles—indeed, went so far as to declare such things could not be.

This kind of riled the prosecuting lawyer, and he set to work trying to convince the obstinate witness.

Here is what measure of success he attained:

"Now, Mr. Jeffrey," said he, with a sweet smile, "suppose you were on the roof of this courthouse and fell off, and were not injured, what would you call that?"

"An accident, sir," replied the witness, promptly.

"Yes, yes; but what else would you call it? Suppose you were doing the same thing next day and fell off, and were not hurt, what would you call that?"

"A coincidence," answered the witness.

"Oh, come, now," the lawyer began again. "I want you to understand what a miracle is. Now, let us say that you were on the roof for the third time, and fell off, and were not injured—now, what would you call that?"

"Three times?" asked the witness.

"Yes, three times," answered the lawyer.

"Well, I should call that a habit," said the obstinate Mr. Jeffrey.

The lawyer had to give up.

This suburban friend of mine is something of a sportsman—at least he has yearnings that way, though up to the present I'm afraid he has made but little headway.

At least I should judge so, from a letter he showed me.

It seems that, with several other amateurs, this friend of mine was anxious to have a day's shooting, so forty live pigeons were ordered from a dealer some miles distant, and a regular batteau at the traps followed.

The shooting was of a really wonderful character, but the actual performances need not be described in detail.





Shortly afterwards, the following note was received by my friend from the pigeon-dealer:

"Gentlemen: I beg sincerely to thank you for your order, and to intimate that I shall be only too happy to supply you with birds on any future occasions of the sort.

"The whole of the forty, for which you paid me at the rate of fifteen cents per head, returned home in safety, and, moreover, brought with them four stray pigeons. My price to your party henceforth will be eight cents per head."

The night I arrived at his house my friend appeared to be in great glee.

I understood the cause when he informed me that the new girl who had come out from New York that afternoon was proving to be a treasure.

His wife, however, took him to task.

"Why, Edward, how foolish you act. We've had good cooks and new cooks many times before, only to have them say the country was too lonely, or the wash too heavy. Don't crow until you're out of the woods," she said.

But Edward was an optimist.

"Yes, of course," said he, "but never under such happy auspices as now, for this one had her pocket picked in the train coming here, and lost both her purse and return ticket."

I've often wondered how long she stayed, and whether Edward's sublime faith was justified.

His wife, it appears, had long since become a scoffer with regard to the servant question.

For instance, we were discussing a well-known society drama which they had recently witnessed.

"The play was excellent, except for one thing," she remarked, "and that was really an inexcusable blunder of the playwright."

"And what was that?" I inquired.

"Why, the time extends over three years, and it shouldn't be more than three months at the most."

"I'd like to know why?"

"Well, simply because the same maid stays through it all?"

That morning who should turn up unexpectedly but Edward's elder brother Jim, who had been some years up in Alaska hunting gold.





He was bearded like a pard.

I noticed that his little niece hung back, as if afraid of his appearance.

Her mother, surprised, called out:

"Why, Katherine, my darling, why don't you give your Uncle Jim a sweet kiss like you used to?"

"I can't, ma," returned the little girl, with the most perfect simplicity you ever saw, "I don't see any place."



Besides his business, Grimsey is one of the school directors, and has certain duties to perform.

This was one of his visiting days.

I went along because I dearly love to see the working of system, and in these Jersey schools they certainly have things down pretty fine.

It paid me to go, too.

Indeed, when one is out gunning for humor it is really surprising the amount of fun that may be found floating around loose.

Grimsey was all right at the business.

He examined the classes with as much freedom as though he had been a pedagogue himself.

These lawyers are hardy men, you know.

It was a class in geography before him.

He had previously given them a short lesson, in the course of which he told them all about the earth's axis, and the poles at the ends thereof, and that the equator was an imaginary line running round the earth.

Wishing to see how much they had learned, he at length asked:

"Now, boys, what is the equator?"

There was a pause, and Mr. Grimsby smiled triumphantly, when a fierce-looking boy growled out the answer.

"The 'quator," said he, "is a menagerie lion running round the earth."

They were bound to entertain me to the full extent while I visited that town.

For, would you believe it, a fire broke out during the second evening, and as Grimsby was foreman of the local engine company, I enjoyed the sensation of running with the machine.

It was a great event.

The house that caught fire burned down, but we saved part of the adjoining buildings.

And we emptied every cistern round.

Next day I could hardly get out of my chair, my knees were so stiff from jumping up and down, pumping at the hand-engine.



But it was glorious.

Efforts to get out the furniture, etc., were only moderately successful, and some of the tenants were in a frantic state.

One young girl rushed up to one of the men belonging to the local company, who was working hard to prevent the fire spreading, and cried:

"Surely you can save my piano; it's on the ground floor!"

The ground floor being completely "gutted," the foreman knew nothing could be done; but to console the fair damsel he smiled, and said:

"Don't you fear, missy, the piano is all right; sure the hose is playin' on it!"

It has always been my rule not to return to my domestic fireside looking like a rough bear, and consequently I visited the local barber before leaving town.

He was a peach, I tell you.

Why, I had an idea he cut kindling wood with that razor, from the hacks it had along the blade.

It drew tears from my eyes.

But he seemed determined to do or die.

"Hold on," I said, finally, "that won't do."

"What's the matter, governor?" he asked, annoyed.

"That razor pulls," I protested.

"Well, I wouldn't bother about that. You just hold tight, and if the handle of the confounded thing don't break, I guarantee I'll manage to get the beard off somehow."

Well, he did, but nearly skinned me alive in the operation, and for three mornings I had great difficulty in eating my breakfast.

However, my wife fed me on patent food.

We have a new kind every day.

I'm getting used to variety.

Sometimes, coming in late at night, I sit down and make quite a meal of the latest prepared food.

I gave my wife some annoyance lately, for which I was truly sorry.

"Have you seen anything of a round package anywhere round?" she asked.



"Why, yes, my dear. You see, last night, feeling very hungry, after my lecture, I got out milk and sugar and ate the whole blessed thing up."

She gave me a look of scorn.



"Why, that was a package of bird seed," she said.

Several times since I have caught myself whistling the little song our dicky bird warbles, and I wonder what is going to happen, you know.

They say a piece of cuttle fish is necessary.

Talk about turning into a bird, there is a book-keeper down at the office where I land most of my superannuated jokes, who doesn't feel quite so chipper as he did a little while back.

You see, he was engaged to a telephone girl connected with the "Hello! Central" main office.

They struck a snag it appears.

One evening, seated by the fire, they were talking of the time when they would have a nice little home of their own.

From one little detail to another, the talk finally drifted to the subject of lighting the fires in the morning.

On this point the young man was decided.

He stated it as his emphatic opinion that it was a wife's place to get up and light the fires, and let the poor, hard-working husband rest.

After this declaration there was silence for about half a second, then the girl thrust out her finger encircled by a gold band in which a tiny stone sparkled, and murmured sweetly, but firmly:

"Ring off, please; I guess you've got connected with the wrong number!"



Being a family man, and with a wide range of experience, I took that misguided youth in hand, and I rather guess he's going to promise solemnly to "love, cherish, and light all the fires for the girl."

They were having some fun after their usual boisterous fashion, when I entered the office.

Gonguldrums flew round, and some of them were really so good that we had to laugh.

"See here," I remarked, "it's no job at all trying to solve one of those ordinary problems with one simile, such as 'When's a door not a door?' and 'Why is your hat like a baby?'"

"Now those that have two are worth worrying over. For instance, let me give you a sample—

suppose we say, 'What are the differences between the son of a millionaire, an organ, and a gluepot?'"

"I give it up," they said, after making a few wild guesses.

"The son of a millionaire is an heir to millions, while an organ has a million airs! D'ye see?" I said, laughingly.

"But what about the gluepot?" inquired the sporting editor.



"Oh, that's where you stick!"

An artist dropped in.

"I've just finished those charcoal drawings," he remarked, landing a package on the Sunday editor's desk.

"What a pity to waste charcoal when fuel is so very high,"

said the man with the shears.

"That editor over at the office of the *Argus-Eyed Magazine* is awful slow about reading manuscript," complained Banks, who writes many of those delightful short romances appearing under various names.

"Well, I've known the time when he got a hustle on him. I



give you my word, he went through six stories in an incredibly short time—I think the umpire said it was less than a minute," I remarked.

"You don't say—now, when was that?"

"When the elevator broke."

Then he changed the subject.

"Have you heard I'm engaged?" he asked.

"You don't say. Rather sudden, wasn't it?"

"I should smile. You see, it happened this way. I've been keeping company with Nellie quite some time, but principally because she's half a head taller than I am, I've hesitated about asking her the fateful question.

"But last night we were down at Coney Island, and I tried to blow in a good part of my week's income.

"Among other things I ordered for dinner was lobster a-la-Newburg, and of course I naturally offered her the first portion.

"Will you have a little lobster?" I asked, sweetly.

"She blushed and laughed, and said:

"Oh! Jerry, this is so sudden."





"And of course that settled the business," I remarked.

"Oh! yes, I had to plunge in, now that the ice was broken. And when the first opportunity came you bet I sealed the bargain in the usual way."

"Meaning that you pressed her ruby lips?"

"Well, she said I might kiss her on either cheek."

"And what did you do?"

"I was puzzled, and hesitated a long time between them."

He said they were both going to a resort up among the mountain lakes, and fairly made my mouth water by speaking of the delightful moonlight rows he expected to enjoy, along with his best girl.

I hope Jerry won't have to say, as I've known more than one enthusiast:

When o'er the lake we used to glide,  
In the days of long ago,  
When you were but my promised bride,  
We then pronounced it "row."

But with the wane of the honeymoon  
There came a change somehow;  
And it seemed that both of us quite soon  
Began to call it "row."

As I was coming out of the newspaper office, jingling some coins gleefully in my pocket, who should I run across but Graigie, the artist?



He had just come into a bit of money, lucky man, and of course we celebrated the event.

"By the way," said he, "do you enjoy walking?"

"I'm enjoying it."

"Good. Then drop round, and I'll take you for a ride in the country in my new automobile."

I didn't go.

But Graigie soon got the hang of the thing, and I began to hear of him entering in all the races.

Finally I met him pretty well patched up, and knowing he had had a tremendous smash while racing, I naturally inquired:

"But did you break the record?"

"Unfortunately," said he, painfully hobbling along at my side, "that was the only thing that escaped me."

Graigie is a daring fellow and hesitates at nothing.

Now, there are some people who shrink from crossing unknown seas, or taking chances of any kind.

I remember, for instance, while I was in a drug

store waiting for a prescription to be compounded, a little boy entered.

He had a bottle of some mixture in his hand.

"Well, bub, what is it?" asked the clerk.

"Please, sir, but here's the medicine I got for me mother an hour ago."

"Yes, and what's the matter with it?" asked the druggist's assistant.

"You didn't write on the bottle whether it was to be taken eternally or infernally, and she's afraid of making a mistake."

I think on the whole she was a wise woman, don't you?

But speaking of medicine brings to mind the time my friend, the dentist, sent his young hopeful to school.



It was his first appearance, and, of course, he had to stand the fire of the usual questions propounded on such an auspicious occasion.

"Who's your family doctor?" asked a big boy.

"Haven't got any," said the new boy.

"How nice!" responded the big boy. "Why, you don't ever have any medicine to take, then?"

"Don't I!" was the sarcastic reply. "That's all you know. My father's a dentist, mother's a homeopath, my Sister Bess has joined the ambulance class, grandpa believes in Christian Science, grandma goes in for every quack medicine that's advertised, my Uncle Sandy's a horse doctor, and"—in a pathetic tone—"they all of 'em experiment on me."



This same little Glaude had been a towner-mouse all his little life up to the present year, but work had been plentiful with dad, and he was discussing with his wife the desirability of sending the lad for a week into the country. Glaude listened thoughtfully, and at length broke in:

"I don't want to go."

"Why not?"

"Gause," said the boy, resolutely, "I've heard how they've got thrashing machines in the country, and it's bad enough here in town when it's done by hand."

One of little Glaude's playmates has a doctor for a father, and during his temporary absence, the two

kids got into his consulting room, where they of course began to play at being physicians.

Luckily he kept his poisons well locked up.

Presently one of them unlocked a door and disclosed an articulated skeleton to the terrified gaze of his playmate.

"Pooh! what are you 'fraid of?" he asked. "It's nothing but an old skellington."

"Wh-wh-where did it come from?" asked Claude, with chattering teeth.

"Oh, I don't know! Papa's had it a long time. I expect it must a been his first patient!"

The pranks and wonderfully witty sayings of children inspire me with many noble thoughts.

They're always at it.

Where we were calling the other night the younger members of the family were much in evidence.

"What was baby crying for just now?" the gentleman of the house inquired of his wife.



"Oh! that Freddie was trying to make him smile with the glove-stretcher," she replied.

I had an idea we would see more of master Fred before the evening was out.

That guess hit the bull's-eye.

"Ma," he exclaimed later on, "can people save parts of themselves in different places?"

"Certainly not—don't be ridiculous, son."

"But Mr. Jolly says so," persisted the boy, stoutly.

"How do you know?" demanded his mother.

"'Cause I heard him tell pa he was going to Colorado for his lungs."

Now Freddie's ma believes in doing her whole duty by her children, though it comes hard to conquer the old Adam which was born in them.

She has of late been endeavoring to impress upon Master Fred the lessons of generosity and unselfishness.

Feeling that her lessons might have borne fruit, she selected a large and a small apple from a dish, and handed them to Freddie, telling him to give his little sister her choice.

Shortly afterward we noticed the little girl munching the smaller apple.

"Freddie," said his surprised mother, "I noticed that Dora took the smaller apple. Did you let her have her choice, as I told you to?"

"Yes," said Freddie, ingenuously, "I told her she



could have that little one or none, and she chose the little one."

This all happened out in the suburbs, you understand, where people live like civilized beings.

Freddie sometimes, in his mischievous pranks, went too far, and had to suffer in consequence.

It is the way of life.

We've all of us gone off on those whaling expeditions when boys.

I judged this fact when a neighbor dropped in and meeting Freddie, said mischievously:

"Why, Freddie, what was all that noise I heard in your woods shed this morning?"

Freddie turned red and looked serious.

"It was a case of sunstruck, ma'am, I guess," he said.

"A sunstruck case?"

"Yes, ma'am—you see pa and me had an argument like; didn't we, pa?"

I tried so hard not to laugh that I must have made an awful face, and when they asked me what was the matter, I declared it was only a touch of indigestion.

But I managed to jot that down on my cuff all right.



By the way, my laundry bills have gone up of late.

You see, the woman declares her girls waste so much time trying to read the notes I write on my cuffs, that she must charge me double rates.

I call that hard lines.

Speaking of indigestion reminds me of the time when someone inadvertently asked my wife whether her illustrious husband ever reminded her of his mother's cooking.

"Not a word," she replied, triumphantly, "because you see his father died of dyspepsia."

Once in a while I manage to turn an honest dollar by doing a little fire insurance.

Recently I was called in to see an old Hebrew, who wished to take out a policy on his shop.

The sum he wished to insure for was a steep one, and made me suspicious.

I had written so many jokes on this subject, you know.

The proprietor wanted to know all about it.

"Well," said he, "of I insure mine shop, and it burned down, say three years afterward, how much do I get?"

"Why, the full amount of the policy," I replied.

"And," he continued, eying me curiously, "of it



get on fire, say one month after, vat do I get sometimes yet?"

"Well, I should imagine in that case you might probably get ten years."

But I see I am beginning to weary you, good folks, and my time has about reached its limit.

I'm not like the poor wretch in prison to whom the benevolent old lady once said:

"I imagine you'll be glad when your time is up."

"No, ma'am," he replied, "not particklerly. You see, I'm up for life."

I've done my best to amuse you, and I only hope every one will feel like saying of me, what the king of the Gannibal Islands remarked, as he polished the last rib of the newspaper man he had invited to dinner:

"That journalist is what I would call a finished scholar."

Let me, in conclusion, relieve my feelings and make my exit under a storm of applause, by singing you a touching little ballad which I composed when laboring under a temporary fit of mental aberration.

Of course it's meant for Clara—I state this to square myself with my wife—but Mary Jane rhyme'd better.



That's poetical license, you know.

Now, let's have a few bars of my latest song,  
professor.

The automobile swings gayly by,  
As jaunty as can be.  
But old-fashioned ways are good enough  
For Mary Jane and me;  
For I can drive with just one hand,  
And Mary won't complain.  
A horse and wagon fill the bill  
For me and Mary Jane.

They're making wireless telegraphs  
For use across the sea.  
I don't believe they'll be much good  
To Mary Jane and me.  
I'd rather whisper in her ear  
While walking down the lane.  
Those new inventions are no use  
To me and Mary Jane.

Electric lights are being hung  
From chandeliers and trees;  
They don't fill any long-felt want  
For Mary Jane and me;

For as we strolled in years gone by  
We like to stroll again.  
The moonlight's plenty good enough  
For me and Mary Jane.

No, thanks, my throat's given out. The other  
verse I'll keep. See you later!

(The end.)



# BOOKS OF REAL HUMOR

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There are two kinds of humor. The right kind and—the wrong kind. The latter is worse than no humor at all, for instead of leaving a sense of enjoyment behind, it makes the unfortunate victim feel that if he had the author handy, he would gladly give all his worldly possessions for a good-sized axe. The other kind—the right kind, turns the silvery lining of lowering clouds to where the reader can see them. The books contained in STREET & SMITH'S HUMOR LIBRARY are *all* of the right kind. There are five of them at present, but more are coming. These five books contain enough laughter to rob this dull world of all its care. Your dealer keeps them.

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